

What the Thai People Think

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Another man who works closely with the royally initiated projects told of one rural trip when almost everyone showed up wearing expensive imported tennis or jogging shoes, and to their embarrassment, when the King joined them he was wearing a pair of locally made shoes costing less than a couple of hundred baht.

In a family-owned and operated photo shop, the daughter — mother of three young children — said when asked, "I don't know what to tell you. Everyone loves the King and knows he is a good man. You won't find anyone who will say anything bad about him because they believe he is good." Over and over, His Majesty is affectionately called "our King" — especially by the common people for whom he is their ultimate source of help. Even those who would never consider asking him for help, think of him with a sense of security. However much they may criticize the government, they would never criticize the King. They cannot visualize Thailand without a monarch. They don't want to think beyond that.

Some of the smaller projects get very little or no publicity or acclaim. After visiting one such project on the grounds of Chitralada Palace, the guide quietly mentioned that the King made a point of visiting the workers there as often as he could, because he realized they sometimes felt discouraged or unappreciated.

While riding in a taxi one day, sirens were suddenly heard coming closer and the heavy traffic came to a halt. Asked if he minded stopping while the royal motorcade passed, he replied that he didn't — "For the king I don't mind waiting, even in a traffic jam, because he works very hard for the people and needs to go quickly from place to place." He did add however, that he didn't have the same feeling when he had to stop for officials or visiting dignitaries to pass!

One ranking military officer of long acquaintance had long ago explained to his wife, and later his children, that as a military man his first duty and devotion was to king and country, ahead of family — no matter how much he loved them. He said he didn't want to die, but he would never hesitate if it was necessary to save the king. Governments might change, but there was only one king.

It wasn't the answers given to the question that were surprising, but the way in which many people responded. While there were no negative or controversial replies, there was a definite feeling that people thought a person who asked such a question in the first

place couldn't be very bright. A lot of people simply repeated the belief in his goodness, as well as their belief in his sincerity in trying to help improve the lives of everyone. One man simply said, "He is the king" in such a strong manner, that for him, it said it all.

A librarian with college-age children, feels that the people don't fully appreciate all the hard work done by the King. She mentioned the projects he had initiated in many fields adding, "he puts his whole heart into it." She was however, critical of people who give large gifts for what they hope to receive in return or to have their picture in the paper, rather than showing simple generosity or goodness of heart. Her immediate concern was that His Majesty works too hard, should rest more and enjoy life. Another point she mentioned was that people shouldn't expect him to attend so many ceremonies; for instance while it is an honor for students to receive diplomas from His Majesty's hands, now there are so many students it is too time-consuming and tiring for him. Her feeling too is that he has already done so many things and worked so hard, he should think of himself more and conserve his strength.

One who has worked for and with the king for more than a quarter of a century, would be expected to have great admiration and respect for His Majesty — both as a king and as a person. Feelings for him have many sides because he himself has a diversity of talents and abilities rarely found in one person.

His Majesty wants the people to see him as a human being as well as a king, and he feels the love and respect of the people must be earned — not simply expected. He also believes that every person — king or commoner — is accountable for his life and deeds. His personal life is secondary to the needs of the people. It is known too, that His Majesty doesn't like "yes men." If he asks for an opinion, he expects an honest answer. There is also the freedom to disagree with him, but in return he expects, a reason or explanation.

The question "what does the king mean to you?" was asked only of Thais; no foreign residents. It's already well known that foreigners who spend any length of time in Thailand soon come to admire His Majesty and his never-ending work to improve the lives of his people. After a recent lecture attended mainly by foreign residents and guests, the speaker was approached by a visitor who was spending six months in Thailand. It was surprising to hear that although, like most visitors, she had read many things

about the royal projects and work of the king and queen, she had not believed it. "I had no idea they really did so much," she commented, adding that she had earlier believed it was simply good public relations work and that staff did the work while the king and queen sat in their palace living a life of quiet luxury!

One who is close to His Majesty described the pressure of being King as incredible — not only is there an attitude that "The King can do no wrong," but he cannot be seen to be doing anything that some might believe is wrong or for which he might be criticized. An example is experimentation with new crops or seeds. If His Majesty suggests to a farmer that certain crops might do well on his land, and they fail — then the farmer is angry because he lost money and time and has no crop to harvest. To avoid this, the King experiments with many new seeds on his own land first, and if they do well then he can suggest their use to the farmers; but if they fail no one can criticize because it's his own land and his own crop failure.

In the course of expecting perfection from the King, the fact that he is also human, is sometimes forgotten. He is a very artistic person and as such, is often moody. His mind is never still — even when sailing, he's often working out some

problem or thinking out a new project. Music and sailing are his greatest relaxations and members of his band are men of many years acquaintance. With them he can relax and enjoy being a man among friends.

Kingship under King Bhumibol Adulyadej has changed to suit the times and conditions. A gentleman who has had the privilege of many years acquaintance with His Majesty described him as "tolerant and understanding, but he sees through things and doesn't like to be fooled." His Majesty's innate sense of humor was also mentioned, as well as the fact that he can be very sarcastic when displeased; however, there is usually a lesson to be learned from the sarcasm.

The word *barami* was used in talking about the King. There is no English language word that gives the deeper Thai meaning,

but the dictionary describes *barami* as "prestige, influence, august presence, augustness, grandeur." From this, it's easier to understand the use of that word in connection with the King, for all of those words are appropriate. His Majesty believes a monarch protects his people, and has dedicated his life to them "with no lapse" and a "personal life secondary to the people's needs."

So — what does King Bhumibol Adulyadej mean to the Thai people? As said earlier, "he is everything!" His oath spoken on the day of his coronation more than 37 years ago, has been lived to its fullest meaning. "We will reign with righteousness for the benefit and happiness of the Siamese people." His name, Bhumibol Adulyadej, is translated to mean "The strength of the land, incomparable power." He is that — and much more.

Thai Economy Towards the Year 2000

THE past 30 years have seen a dramatic transformation in Thailand's industrial structure. From a primary product producer and exporter, Thailand has evolved into a major regional manufacturing force. Agriculture now accounts for only 10.5 per cent of economic activity in 1995 while manufacturing contributes about 32.1 per cent. It is also projected that agriculture will play a lesser role with its share reduced to only 8 per cent in the year 2000. Manufacturing will therefore account for 33 per cent.

The structural transformation is most evident in the export sector. Manufactured exports have more than doubled from around 38 per cent of total exports in 1982 to 84 per cent in 1995. Textiles have supplanted rice as Thailand's major export item and the nation is now a major exporter of more sophisticated products such as hard-disk drives for computers, precision micro ball-bearings and integrated circuits.

The structural shifts of the Thai economy have been fueled in part by the extremely rapid growth of the economy in recent years. Following a steady 5.4 per cent growth in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 1980 to 1986, the economy accelerated into double-digit growth in 1988 with GDP increasing by 13.3 per cent—the highest in East Asia. This was repeated in 1989 and 1990 with growth of 12.2 per cent and 11.2 per cent respectively. However, with quick recovery of the Thai economy after the Gulf War in 1991, the economy grew at the accelerated rates of 8.7 and 8.6 per cent in 1994 and 1995 respectively.

Inflows of foreign capital and technology transfer have also contributed significantly to the structural transformation. From the end of 1986, Thailand became a favourite location for foreign firms escaping from appreciating currencies and escalating labour costs at home. This resulted in a quantum leap in net foreign direct investment inflows from levels of around US\$200 million in the mid-1980s to over US\$2 billion in 1990.

The Thai government has long recognized the key role of foreign investment in bringing new technologies, management, and access to markets in the 1990s. Liberalization of the economic environment should ensure continued healthy inflows of direct foreign investment and the accompanying technological spillovers.

Investing in Thailand's Future

As Thailand moves towards the 21st century and the growth and fundamental stability of the economy continue, numerous new business opportunities will open up for both foreign investors.

Thailand's rapid economic growth has resulted in increasing sophistication of manufacturing activities. However, the industrial structure must make significant strides to support such growth through progressive industrial consolidation and development of higher levels of technological capabilities. These needs have created a wide range of investment and trade opportunities in engineering and supporting industries. The opportunities range from basic metal-working activities to petrochemicals in the Eastern Seaboard Area to the provision of testing and research and development services.

Not surprisingly, the rapid growth of recent years has also led to a manpower shortage and infrastructure bottlenecks. Given the magnitude of investment required, private-sector participation has been encouraged in areas ranging from construction of industrial estates to co-generation of electricity, to development of telecommunications services, and establishment of private engineering universities. More investment in infrastructure and manpower development is expected to be carried out by private sector consortia in the 1990s.

Beyond Thailand's borders, political and economic reforms in neighbouring countries are very promising. Economic growth in Indochina and Myanmar, representing a market of over 120 million people with substantial human and natural resources, offers significant business opportunities. Thailand provides an ideal springboard for companies seeking business opportunities in Indochina and Myanmar, in terms of geographical location, business and financial services and basic infrastructure.

The service sector is one of the most dynamic sectors of the economy. Tourism is the major foreign exchange earner of the nation. More than 7 million tourists worldwide visited Thailand in 1995, including from new markets such as Southeast Asian countries, China and Russia. Apart from natural beauties and cultural and historical sites, eco-tourism and recreational tourism such as diving, hiking

and rockclimbing have become increasingly popular. Other service sectors such as finance, fashion and the media have seen rapid growths, thanks to the growing middle classes and favourable policies such as trade and financial liberalization.

Another service sector which experienced rapid progress are telecommunications services. At present there exist more than 1,000 kilometres of optical cable connecting major cities. In addition, the telephone networks will be based completely on digital technology in a very near future. By 1996, one in every ten people will have a telephone; the ratio will increase to one in every five people by the year 2001. The capacity of telecommunication services are multiplied by two satellites, Thaicom 1 and 2, operating on the C and KU bands. By 1994, there were already more than half a million people using cellular telephones or the equivalence of 17 per cent of the total fixed-line telephones. The National Information Technology Plan IT2000, will promote the use of information technology to improve the quality of life and to support various government policies such as decentralization, economic well-being to rural areas, traffic management, universal access to education and preservation and rehabilitation of natural resources and the environment.

Despite rapid growth in the manufacturing and service sectors, Thailand remains one of the world's top food exporting countries. With its abundant agricultural resources, the country will continue to enhance the quality of and add value to its agricultural products. The country's strong scientific base in biotechnology offers many opportunities of introducing innovative and mature agro-industrial technology.

The last major emerging area concerns an increasing awareness of environmental issues and energy conservation. The Thai government has identified the environment as a key concern for future development.

Thailand is poised to enter the ranks of newly industrialized nations. The transformation of the Thai economy offers both challenges and opportunities for the nation, with constructive participation by the private sector in the growth process proving to be both satisfying and rewarding.

(Abridged)

A Monarch Who Cares

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local monks but solicits firsthand information from farmers and agricultural workers concerning their common problems, needs and hopes. On returning to Bangkok, he initiates steps to ensure that villagers receive required assistance. If appropriate government departments are unable to help immediately, His Majesty often uses his own funds to initiate the projects. Government agencies will later take over the responsibility for their operation with His Majesty retaining an advisory role.

As a moral force of the nation, His Majesty managed to use his rights to be consulted, to warn and to encourage in ways that have profoundly affected the course of events. His advice led to solving the communist insurgency in the 1970s. He even played a dramatic role in ending political disruption in 1973 and 1992.

Undoubtedly, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej is considered to be one of the most dedicated monarchs in the world. Thus in 1987, the people of Thailand gave him the well-deserved title of "Maharaj" or "The Great."



9 October 1992: His Majesty the King conferring with officials from the Royal Irrigation Department during a visit to Ban Khok Ku Wae Irrigation Project under the Royal Initiation of His Majesty the King, Tak Bai District, Narathiwat Province.



Our heartfelt felicitations to the people of Thailand on the occasion of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Birthday And The National Day Of Thailand.



The management and staff of Thai Airways International Public Company Limited submit their most loyal greetings and best wishes to His Majesty the King on the occasion of His Royal Birthday Anniversary



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